

## A Tool to Assess the Alignment of State/Territory PDS and QRIS

Professional development systems (PDS) and quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) are two important sub-systems of the comprehensive early childhood and school-age system. The degree of alignment among common functions across the systems aids effective and efficient program and practitioner quality improvement. State/Territory leaders can use the self-assessment tool to guide alignment across similar system functions. Leaders can use the tool to develop a common understanding of the mission and goals, identify gaps, and strengthen the design, implementation, and sustainability of both sub-systems.

Policymakers and leaders will be most successful in using this tool to support planning and implementation if they designate a State/Territory team and a timeline for working through the indicators. It is important to devote adequate time and resources for planning and implementation. An effective systems change typically takes place over a number of years; establish incremental steps and progress indicators to maintain momentum and ultimately achieve the desired goal(s). It will likely take more than one work session for a planning and implementation team to review and discuss each step. Before using this tool, the team should determine if any of these functions have been started or completed<sup>1</sup>.

This tool is organized by six suggested functions:

1. [Define and Coordinate Leadership](#);
2. [Enhance and Align Regulations and Standards](#);
3. [Finance Strategically](#);
4. [Create and Support Improvement Strategies](#); and
5. [Recruit and Engage Stakeholders](#).

### How to Use the Tool<sup>2</sup>

Rank your progress on each of these functions according to a four-point scale as described below:

- 1 = No action:** The State/Territory has not started work on this indicator  
**2 = Developing:** The State/Territory has begun planning on this indicator  
**3 = Implementing:** The State/Territory is making progress on this indicator  
**4 = Fully Implementing:** The State/Territory is fully implementing or has completed this indicator

Based on your rating, add incremental action steps and indicators of progress to the following table.

**FUNCTION 1: DEFINE AND COORDINATE LEADERSHIP**

Key stakeholders establish a common vision and goals for effective early childhood and school-age systems. Representatives provide leadership to the partnerships and collaborative efforts to build a coordinated system. The QRIS and PDS sub-system governing bodies have clearly defined authority to recommend or implement policies, initiatives, and investments. They align their work with the overarching comprehensive plan and coordinate with other entities.

Indicator	1	2	3	4	Action Steps and Progress Indicators
An overarching comprehensive plan, built on a common vision and goals, exists.					
A structure exists to build the early childhood and school-age system including PDS and QRIS.					
The QRIS and PDS sub-system governing bodies include representation from child care, licensing, health, education (including special education, Head Start and K-12), family support and home visiting, social services, and parents.					
Governance across PDS and QRIS includes the authority to recommend or implement policies, initiatives, and investments.					
There are formal agreements, rules, or policies that enable and authorize the work of the group in the areas of QRIS and PDS. (Codifying QRIS and PDS in statute or rule can ensure sustainability).					
The governing body addresses data sharing needs and implements strategies to link program participation, licensing, QRIS, workforce, and child data.					
Other Indicators?					

**FUNCTION 2: ENHANCE AND ALIGN REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS**

Regulations, such as licensing, ensure the health, safety, and well-being of children in group settings. Standards for programs define the quality expectations for the program as a whole. Practitioner standards define the learning outcomes and performance expectations for effective practice. Aligned QRIS and PDS provide pathways for all programs and practitioners to meet entry-level expectations and continually improve.

Indicator	1	2	3	4	Action Steps and Progress Indicators
Licensing regulations set the foundation for PDS and QRIS standards.					
Program and practitioner standards align with evidence-based learning and development expectations for children.					
A common core of practitioner standards applies across roles and sectors. Specializations built from the common core apply to specific roles, settings, or sectors.					
Practitioner standards provide the foundation for professional preparation and ongoing PD requirements of the PDS and QRIS.					
Registry data links to the comprehensive early childhood and school-age data system.					
Standards are updated regularly to reflect current research and best practices.					
Other indicators?					

**FUNCTION 3: FINANCE STRATEGICALLY**

Core funding is sufficient for organizational support to develop the governance structure, convene stakeholders, and support the infrastructure (including staffing, quality assurance processes, data systems, etc.) necessary to start up, scale up, and sustain the comprehensive early childhood and school-age systems. Leaders plan for sufficient financing for system infrastructure and initiatives, including costs of developing the PDS and QRIS subsystems.

Indicator	1	2	3	4	Action Steps and Progress Indicators
QRIS financial incentives are linked to indicators of quality learning environments and sufficient to reward and sustain continuous quality improvement.					
PDS financial incentives address access to PD, compensation, and workplace conditions and link to the QRIS.					
Public and private funding for PDS and QRIS infrastructure supports coordination of data collection, staffing, PD opportunities, and quality assurance activities.					
Sufficient and sustainable funding supports ongoing progress of alignment of PDS and QRIS systems.					
Other indicators?					

**FUNCTION 4: ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY**

Data is available to the comprehensive early childhood and school-age system decision makers to inform policy decisions. An accountability system identifies benchmarks and outcomes for programs, practitioners, and policy change to ensure alignment of the PDS and QRIS. An integrated data system tracks indicators for individuals, programs, and supports to monitor short- and long-term goals. Evaluation includes measures of alignment between the PDS and QRIS.

Indicator	1	2	3	4	Action Steps and Progress Indicators
The data system tracks workforce qualifications and achievement linked to PDS and QRIS standards.					
A training and/or trainer approval system approves and evaluates the content and delivery of training to ensure alignment with QRIS standards.					
A practitioner/training/trainer registry exists, and verifies attainment of QRIS workforce standards.					
Decisionmakers regularly review and analyze data to guide continuous improvement and inform planning, policy, practice and operations.					
Other indicators?					

**FUNCTION 5: CREATE AND SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

All practitioners and programs can access improvement strategies that meet their unique needs. A continuum of PD opportunities supports improved practice and program quality.

Indicator	1	2	3	4	Action Steps and Progress Indicators
Technical assistance addresses PDS and QRIS standards. Registry or QRIS participation is required to access this technical assistance.					
Specialized technical assistance, such as support for caring for infants and toddlers, integrating children with special needs, and working with school-age children is available.					
The PDS provides a continuum of supports that meets the needs of all members of the workforce.					
TA specialists facilitate movement to higher QRIS levels.					
Career advising linked to PDS and QRIS system requirements is available to practitioners.					
Training, coursework, and degrees articulate from one level to the next, facilitating career growth, improved practice, and higher program quality.					
Practitioners receive orientation on the standards and the appropriate use of assessment data.					
Other indicators?					

**FUNCTION 6: RECRUIT AND ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS**

State/Territory leaders use multiple approaches to inform all practitioners, programs, and the public about PDS and QRIS resources and services. Partners work together to increase access to and build public support for PDS and QRIS. Communication is coordinated with the efforts of the larger comprehensive early childhood and school-age system.

Indicator	1	2	3	4	Action Steps and Progress Indicators
PDS and QRIS share a common message and communicate the message consistently to all stakeholders including parents, practitioners, legislators, other State and local entities, K-12, philanthropy, business, civic, and community leaders. Messages are appropriate to culturally and linguistically diverse populations.					
PDS and QRIS utilize clear, succinct, and consistent messaging (tag lines), and easily recognizable symbols (logos/ratings) to convey indicators of PDS and QRIS quality to providers, parents, policymakers, and the public.					
A variety of methods and media (social, internet, print, and broadcast) exist to help providers and staff learn about and access PD opportunities, including online databases.					
Outreach and marketing efforts promote the alignment of PDS and QRIS and benefits of participation across sectors.					
Representatives from all the State PDS and QRIS agencies guide data system development and linkages.					
Key stakeholders, policymakers, and funders use data to revise and improve standards, policies, and procedures					
Other indicators?					

## Supports and Resources

---

This tool is the result of collaboration between the Office of Child Care's Technical Assistance Network partners including the Child Care State Systems Specialist Network, the National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives, and the National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement. The Office of Child Care's Technical Assistance Network provides consultation and other resources that can support the alignment of PDS and QRIS.

### ***National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center), jointly funded by ACF's Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start***

- [Aligned Professional Development Systems Planning and Implementation Guide](#)
- [Core Knowledge and Competencies Planning and Implementation Guide](#)
- [Workforce Data Planning and Implementation Guide](#)
- [Technical Assistance Planning and Implementation Guide](#)
- [Considerations for Enhancing School-Age Professional Development Systems](#)

### ***National Center on Child Care Quality (Quality Center)***

- [Quality Rating and Improvement System Resource Guide](#)

### ***Other Resources***

- [Comprehensive Early Childhood Systems in States: Desired Results and Key Functions](#)
- [What Results Should A Comprehensive System Deliver?](#)

---

<sup>1</sup> National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives. (2013). *Aligned professional development systems planning and implementation guide*. Retrieved from <http://demo.childcare.gov/resource/aligned-professional-development-systems-planning-and-implementation-guide>

<sup>2</sup> This tool was based on Connors-Tadros, L., & Carlson, B.C. (2010). Integrating Quality Rating Systems and Professional Development Systems in Early Childhood. In, Howes, C., & Pianta, R. (Eds.). *Foundations for Teaching Excellence: Connection Early Childhood Quality Rating, Professional Development, and Competency Systems in States*. Volume 2 in the NCRECE series. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Co., pages 25-46.